

BW404
M3C3

A

CANDID REPLY

TO CERTAIN INQUIRIES

RELATIVE TO THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

METHODIST CONFERENCE,

HELD IN MANCHESTER, 1849.

BY GEORGE BROWNE MACDONALD.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON :

SOLD BY JOHN MASON, 66, PATERNOSTER ROW :

H. W. WALKER, BRIGGATE, LEEDS :

PEART AND SON, BIRMINGHAM :

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1849.

108

BW404
M3E3

Wesley Memorial Library

Thursfield Smith Collection
of
Wesleyana



Atlanta, - Georgia

P. C. J. M.
A
CANDID REPLY

TO CERTAIN INQUIRIES

RELATIVE TO THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

METHODIST CONFERENCE,

HELD IN MANCHESTER, 1849.

BY GEORGE BROWNE MACDONALD.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON :

SOLD BY JOHN MASON, 66, PATERNOSTER ROW :

H. W. WALKER, BRIGGATE, LEEDS :

PEART AND SON, BIRMINGHAM :

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

—
1849.

BW 404
M 3 C 3

Wes. 1419

A CANDID REPLY, &c.

THE circumstances which gave rise to this reply may be stated in a few words. I found, in conversation with members of the Wesleyan Society in Huddersfield, that strange and most erroneous views were entertained relative to the late proceedings of the Wesleyan Conference. Some reports to which I listened were pure fabrications, and others contained facts so distorted and perverted, that I had much difficulty in at all recognising them. One thing was certain, that the minds of many of my friends were greatly excited, and that a suspicion was widely spread, that in the expulsion of Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith, the Conference had adopted some novel, and at the same time, irregular and improper means. I expressed a wish to two of my friends, whose feelings seemed greatly disturbed on the subject, that they should put down in writing the cause of their dissatisfaction, promising that I would give them such explanations as were in my power. My reply to those inquiries is contained in the following pages. I have only to request from those who may honour them with a perusal, thoughtfulness and candour. They will not be allured onwards by any piquancy of style, arising from personalities, invectives, or sarcasm. My reasons may not to all minds appear conclusive, but at least they are honestly and fairly stated. No one can hope to produce much impression on a prejudiced mind. I write for

those, who, whilst they claim independence of judgment, are sufficiently anxious for truth, as to be willing carefully to examine facts and arguments, opposed to their pre-conceived, it may be, their published arguments.

There are some preliminary questions necessary to be decided, before any reply can be given to several of the inquiries which you propose. The design and constitution of the Wesleyan Ministry must be understood. Its object may be gathered from a question and answer contained in the minutes of 1744 :

“ What may we reasonably believe to be God’s design in raising up the Preachers called *Methodists*? Answer. To reform the nation, more particularly the church: to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”

The peculiar constitution of the Wesleyan Ministry consists in the fact of the union of a number of preachers, for the avowed purpose of accomplishing one object — “ to spread scriptural holiness over the land.” The first meeting of preachers contemplating such a union, took place at the Foundry, Monday, June 25, 1744. The whole record will amply repay a perusal. No one can fail to observe their anxiety “ to know of every doctrine, whether it be of God,” and their determination to preserve their Christian liberty, intact. After some time spent in prayer, the design of the meeting was proposed, namely, to consider, “ 1. What to teach ; 2. How to teach ; 3. What to do ? that is, How to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.” The result of a series of meetings and conversations was an agreement as to the doctrines which they should preach, the manner in which they should expound and enforce them, and the disci-

pline by which they should be governed. This latter point affects the question under consideration. The views and judgment of men may change—their moral state and character may become deteriorated—death would remove one and another, from the number of those who formed the original union,—others would seek to join their fellowship,—how are the principles on which the original compact was founded, to be preserved inviolate? The plan adopted was the only one which could meet the case: an agreement to submit every year to mutual examination, as to doctrine, morals, and discipline, in fact as to everything which involved a transparent fidelity to the principles and practice, on which the union was founded. One object was avowed—the mode of accomplishing it was agreed upon—and every member of the voluntary brotherhood felt that he was under a moral obligation, to give to his co-associates the most perfect satisfaction, as to his integrity and honesty, in continuing to maintain the original terms on which the union was based. These examinations have been continued without interruption, down to the present day. Mr. Wesley saw, what any man less shrewd than he would have seen, that a co-pastorate like that of the Wesleyan Ministry, could not exist for many years, unless the most perfect confidence in each other's integrity was maintained. He knew the infirmities of human nature, and how necessary it was to guard against their influence, when exerted to destroy brotherly love and confidence.

"What can be done," said he, (Minutes, vol. i. 19) "in order to a closer union of our helpers with each other? Answer. 1. Let them be deeply convinced of the want there is of it at present, and the absolute necessity of it. 2. Let them pray for an earnest desire of union. 3. *Let them speak freely to each other.*"

And can any plan be suggested more scriptural or more rational, than that godly men, associated together on recognised principles, for an avowed object, should "speak freely to each other?" How many evil surmisings, and how much misapprehension would be at once removed, by a faithful adherence to that short rule! "Are there any objections to any of our preachers," was the inquiry made in the Annual Conference, and then every one was expected "to speak freely." The reply to this question in 1776, is worthy of notice.

Answer. "Yes. It is objected that some are utterly unqualified for the work, and that others do it negligently, as if they imagine they had nothing to do but to preach once or twice a day. In order to silence this objection for ever, which had been repeated ten times over, the preachers were examined at large, *especially those concerning whom there was the least doubt.* The result was, that one was excluded for insufficiency, two for misbehaviour. And we were thoroughly satisfied that all the rest had both grace and gifts for the work wherein they are engaged. I hope, therefore, we shall hear of this objection no more."

This hope, however, was a vain one. In the following year, the answer to the same question is thus recorded in the minutes.

"Yes. 'It is objected that most of them are not called of God to preach.' This deserves our serious consideration. In the large Minutes we ask: 'How shall we try those who think they are called by the Holy Ghost to preach.' Page 18, 19. Q. Is this method of trial sufficient: can we find a better? Weigh the matter impartially. A. We cannot find a better method, any more scriptural, or more rational. Q. But suppose they were called once, have not many of them forfeited their calling? A. Examine them one by one, and *whoever has any objection or doubt concerning any one, let him now speak, or for ever hold his peace.*"

In the year following, the investigation was pursued,

"Are there any objections to any of our preachers? A. Examine them one by one. This was carefully done, and two were set aside."

I quote these Minutes, not as affirming in so many and express terms the law by which the Conference claims

the right "to require a frank and brotherly answer from any member in the body, for the satisfaction of his fellow-labourers, on any question seriously affecting the peace, unity, and order of the connexion," but as affording evidence of the existence of the ancient usages of the Conference. There is in Methodism, a *lex non scripta*, an unwritten law—and which, in the form of long-continued and uninterrupted usage, claims equal authority with written law. Every one intimately acquainted with Methodism could at once adduce instances to prove my assertion. The validity and authority of these usages were recognised by the Vice-Chancellor, when giving judgment on Dr. Warren's case. After reading several articles from various Minutes of the Conference, he remarked, "Here it is to be observed, that the usages of the body are expressly recognised in connection with their laws. And on examining those resolutions in the Leeds case, to which reference is made in 1829, as recorded at length in the Minutes of 1828, I find resolutions to the following effect : after eulogising several eminent persons, who, in reference to the Leeds disputes, had, under very trying circumstances, acted very much to the satisfaction of their brethren ; the Conference especially mentions the support which had been given by their friends, to ' the rules and usages of the Connexion.' So we find in this authorized document also, *usages* are again expressly noticed, in connection with the *laws* of the body. Therefore I must say, that it does appear to me, moderately instructed, as of course I must be on all matters regarding this great and important body, that the Conference, which must be considered as the supreme governing body of the Society, does, over and over again, take notice of the powers

exercised, not only through the medium of what are called ‘laws,’ but through the medium of what are termed ‘usages.’ The Lord Chancellor, to whom an appeal was made from the decision of the Vice-Chancellor, made the following remarks bearing on this subject. “It is said, that if a law is clear, usage at variance with that law, cannot alter the law. But I do not consider, taking the law by itself, for the reasons I have stated, that the law is perfectly clear. Standing by itself, the law is not perfectly clear. But this is to be considered, with respect to the usage, that it is not the ordinary usage of ordinary individuals, acting under a code of laws: but that it is the usage of the very legislative body itself, acting under and interpreting its own laws.” There is no usage of the Methodist Conference which could be supported by a larger number of affidavits—many of these made by Ministers whose personal knowledge of the proceedings of Conference extends over 40 or 50 years—than the right, claimed and exercised, to institute the inquiries to which I have referred. It is not known that a question was ever raised on this point till the year 1835. At that Conference, certain brethren suspected of sympathizing with Dr. Warren in his revolutionary projects, and of secretly aiding and abetting him, were required to give frank and brotherly answers to questions affecting their personal fidelity to Methodism, and involving the welfare of the Connexion. For the first time the point was raised, by what *right* Conference instituted inquiries which might implicate individuals in serious consequences, without a formal and specific charge having been previously given to them in writing. What steps did the Conference then take? Precisely the same that

the Legislature of this country adopted on a recent case. The Queen in great clemency mitigated the sentence of death which had been passed on Mr. O'Brien, when found guilty of High Treason, to transportation for life. He demurred at this decision, and raised the objection, that her Majesty could not, by law, transport him—he must either be hanged or pardoned. He was willing that either should take place—but transported he would not be—it was contrary to law. The matter was soon settled. The supreme legislature passed a short *declaratory act*, explaining its own previous laws, and in terms, of course, perfectly intelligible, so that not another word was heard from O'Brien's counsel, about the right of the Queen to transport a convicted traitor. And I will venture to say, that the point raised by O'Brien is set at rest for ever. Exactly thus did the Conference act in 1835. It passed what it designated at the time *Declaratory resolutions*.

Q. xxiii. "Is it expedient, on account of recent occurrences, to re-assert, by *Declaratory Resolutions*, any of our rules or usages, which individuals have attempted to contradict or pervert? A. We think it is expedient, and therefore the Conference *unanimously declares* as follows, viz. 1. That not only the Conference, but all its District Committees, whether ordinary or special, possess the undoubted right of instituting, in their official and collective character, any inquiry or investigation, which they may deem expedient, into the moral, christian, or ministerial conduct of the preachers under their care, even although no formal or regular accusation may have been previously announced on the part of any individual: and that they have also the authority of coming to such decisions thereupon, as to them may seem most conformable to the laws of the New Testament, and to the rules and usages of our Connexion. In the District Meetings, especially, the Chairman has the official right of originating such inquiries, if he think necessary; because our rule declares, that 'the Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be *responsible* to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his District is concerned.'

2. "That all preachers who desire to remain in ministerial communion

with us, are considered as retaining that communion on the distinct condition, that they hold themselves individually pledged to submit, in a peaceable and Christian spirit, to the usual disciplinary investigation, not only of the Conference, but of all its District Committees, whether ordinary or special, when summoned according to our rules and usages; and that any preacher who refuses to submit to the friendly examination of the chairman and other brethren, or to take his trial, regularly and formally, before the preachers either of an ordinary or of a special District Committee, when duly required so to do, shall be considered as, *ipso facto*, incurring the penalty of suspension until the ensuing Conference; because no possible security can be found even against the worst forms of moral or ministerial delinquency, if persons charged with any misconduct, and summoned to trial, be allowed to evade with impunity our established modes of investigation."

I have stated the facts which gave rise to the celebrated Declaratory resolutions of 1835. A refusal to submit to them in a District meeting must necessarily be followed by *suspension*, and the same conduct adopted in Conference must necessarily occasion *exclusion*. Contumacy in law is a wilful contempt and disobedience to any lawful summons or order of court: a refusal to appear in court when legally summoned, or disobedience to its rules and orders. The laws of any associated body of men whether voluntary, as in Nonconformist churches, or political, which cannot be enforced, are in fact not laws, but mere recommendations, which may or may not be complied with, as individuals may decide. This is too obvious to require either argument or proof. It is of importance to remember, that Dr. Warren made his appeal to the Courts of Chancery before the Declaratory regulations of 1835 were published. The perfect truth and justice of those regulations, as being really, what they are nominally, *declaratory*, in reference to the right of District meetings to suspend, and of Conference to expel a contumacious minister, are conclusively established in the judgment given by the Lord

Chancellor on Dr. Warren's case. "A copy of the charges" said he, "was handed to Dr. Warren, he had intimation of the day of meeting ; and he attended accordingly. So far all the proceedings were regular. Dr. Warren afterwards withdrew, and refused to attend his trial. They suspended him, not because he was found guilty of the charges that had been preferred against him, but because he refused to undergo the trial. He said, 'I will not attend.' They gave him notice : he would not attend ; and, if I may make use of the expression with reference to proceedings of this kind, they suspended him for contumacy—that is the fact. Had they power to do so ? Why I refer them back to that which I consider to be the foundation of the whole of this authority, namely the law of 1791. In a case of emergency the District Committee may meet, they may consider that case of emergency. It is not for us to say whether it was a case of emergency or not ; it is for that particular tribunal, the District Committee, to say whether it was a case of emergency or not. They did meet ; they considered it was a case of emergency, and they had a power to decide according to their own discretion ; and their decision is final until the next Conference. What did they decide ? They decided, that because he did not choose to attend the investigation of the affair, he should be suspended. I think this comes clearly within the scope and meaning of the article of 1791, as coupled with the law of 1792, and that they had power to do what they did." The Lord Chancellor knew perfectly well the law of the case, when he said, "they had power to do what they did." The Deed of Declaration enrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery, bearing the date of February

28, 1784, defined to be "The yearly Conference of the people called Methodists," lay before him. He had read it carefully. He knew the power of Conference to expel. No one can misunderstand the terms employed. "The Conference shall and may expel and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connexion therewith, or from being upon trial, any person, member of the Conference, or admitted into connexion, or upon trial, for any cause which to the Conference may seem fit or necessary ; and every member of the Conference so expelled and put out, shall cease to be a member thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he were naturally dead."

I have now finished the prefatory remarks which I thought were necessary to be made, before replying to your inquiries. My motto is, "measures and not men," and I should greatly prefer, for truth's sake, to argue this question algebraically—by letters, and not by the introduction of the names of living men, which cannot fail to awaken the sympathies of personal friendship, or to excite possibly, the vindictiveness of latent dislike. A case, hypothetically, but substantially the same, may be drawn up, as referring to A. B, and I have perfect confidence that the judgment of intelligent, impartial, and unbiassed adjudicators, would confirm the decision of Conference, in the real, actual case, which has come under its notice. I omit any reference to the *spirit* in which several of the questions are proposed. I am content to place them on record, as evidence of excited feeling, and of prejudgment.

1. *Were the trial and expulsion of Mr. Everett legal ?*
I need not remind you that the *primitive* meaning of

the word trial is "test," "examination." But I presume that you employ it, in its commonly received acceptation of judicial examination. In this sense of the word, as involving the idea that charges were preferred, and a judicial process of examination adopted for the proof or disproof of them, there was no trial : and yet the expulsion of Mr. Everett from the Conference, was Methodistically legal.

2. If legal, according to what law ?

By the law implied and acted upon, as recorded in the Minutes of 1776 and 1777, (Question v. page 122, and question viii. page 129, Vol I.) and the Declaratory Resolutions of the Conference in 1835 (Question xxiii. pages 549, 550. Vol. VII.)

3. It is affirmed that the law of 1835 is the law of 1777 declared; what relationship is there between the two ?

It is affirmed—by whom ? Not by the Conference, in what may be regarded as the preamble to the Declaratory Act of 1835. I have already recorded the words—"Is it expedient, on account of recent occurrences, to re-assert, by DECLARATORY RESOLUTIONS any of our *rules* and *usages*, which individuals have attempted to contradict or pervert?" Not by the official document published "in reference to recent important decisions and acts of discipline." The words are these—"the Conference re-asserts its general authority, and the general authority of the several District Meetings : an authority in full accordance with the ancient *rules* and *usages* of the Connexion, and supported especially by the Minutes of 1777," &c. But I have no objection to consider the question as a truthful affirmation, and my

answer is, as follows. The law of 1777 affirmed and recorded the right of Conference *when in session* to institute inquiries affecting the moral and ministerial character of its members, although no formal or regular accusation had been previously announced on the part of any individual. In the preceding year, as the result of examining at large the preachers then assembled, and *especially those, concerning whom there was the least doubt,* one was excluded for insufficiency, two for misbehaviour. In 1778, as the result of examining the preachers one by one, "two were set aside." Now here are the facts, that in 1776 and 1778, the members of the Methodist Conference assembled, and that consequent upon investigations, then and there originated, five preachers were excluded. Can it be supposed for one moment, that no questions were at that time proposed to those concerning whom there was some *doubt*, so that they might remove ungrounded suspicions and manifest their own innocence?

4. *Was Mr. Everett expelled on suspicion or for contumacy?*

My reply could be given in two words, but as utterly false statements are reiterated on this subject, I choose to be more diffuse. Mr. Everett was a minister concerning whom, several members of the Conference had "objections or doubts." Whether these were well or ill-founded does not influence the question at all. The fact was, they seriously entertained "doubts" which affected the moral and ministerial character of a co-pastor, and by recorded law they were not merely allowed but required to "speak now (in Conference, when the parties met face to face) without any disguise or reserve, or for ever hold their peace." He refused to

answer questions which might at once have resolved their "doubts :" and he was expelled for contumacy, because he refused to submit to an established mode investigation. He had been a consenting party to the law of an association of ministers that "any preacher who refuses to submit to the friendly examination of the chairman and of other brethren, to take his trial, regularly and formally, before the preachers either of an ordinary or of a special District Committee, when duly required so to do, shall be considered as *ipso facto*, incurring the penalty of suspension until the ensuing Conference." If contumacy in the lower court be followed by *suspension*, it must necessarily issue in *expulsion*, when persevered in before the highest court. Dr. Warren and his friends, to serve a purpose, itinerated through the country, and held public meetings, for the sake of exposing the tyranny and corruption of Methodist preachers in suspending a brother minister, because he was a liberal, and dared to think for himself, and to oppose a *clique* of men, who for ambitious purposes were establishing a Theological Institution, &c. I heard these assertions made in crowded assemblies, and for a while, simple-minded people who could not think that any one who had sustained the office of a christian minister for thirty years, was really imposing upon them as to the ground of his suspension, joined in the cry of tyranny and oppression. The judgment expressed in Westminster Hall, was uninfluenced by personalities and sympathies. "They suspended him," said Lord Lyndhurst, "not because they found him guilty of the charges that had been preferred against him : but they suspended him because he refused to undergo the trial." He said, "I will not attend." The position of Mr. Everett is essentially similar, and he is

in truth no more expelled on suspicion of having written the *Fly Sheets*, than Dr. Warren was suspended because he opposed the Theological Institution.

5. *If on suspicion, on what ground?*

My reply to the former question renders any answer to this one, unnecessary.

6. *If for contumacy, clear the Conference from partiality in expelling him, and not others, who were equally guilty.*

This question is a very fair one, supposing that by the term "equally guilty," you refer exclusively to the fact that others besides Mr. Everett refused to submit to our established modes of investigation; and it shall receive a calm and candid reply. All the parties had put themselves into the power of Conference to inflict on them the highest ecclesiastical sentence, expulsion, so that no one could legally complain of an act of injustice being inflicted on him, if the extreme sentence were pronounced. But constituted as human society is, every supreme authority must necessarily be invested with power to mitigate punishment, for reasons which, to that authority, may seem justifiable. What is the proper design of all human punishment? Certainly not the simple purpose of inflicting pain and degradation. The supremacy of law must be vindicated, the amendment of the transgressor must be contemplated, and, at the same time impressive warning will be given, to deter others from acts which would involve them in similar consequences. These principles, but for the intervention of what is considered by many to be a divine law, appointing a special sentence to be inflicted on murderers, are conclusive in argument against all capital punishments. In proportion as governments become more enlightened and less despotic, these principles influence both the

legislature and the executive. I was present in the court at Warwick many years ago, when Lord Chief Justice Tindal presided at the trial of the Birmingham Rioters. A number of them stood at the bar, charged under one common indictment, and sufficient evidence was adduced in reference to each one of them, to lead the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty against them all. It was in the power of the Lord Chief Justice, to have inflicted upon every one of them, the severest sentence appointed by law. But how did he act? That profound lawyer and impartial judge, understood perfectly well the philosophy of jurisprudence. He vindicated the supremacy of the law, by inflicting the highest penalty on two or three, and those selected for reasons which were most obvious. A few weeks or a few months imprisonment, constituted the sentence passed upon the rest. And all thinking and humane men approved of his conduct, and no public meetings were held by the friends of those on whom the heaviest penalty fell, to incense the public in reference to the partiality of the judge. The extreme sentence of expulsion of a private member from the Methodist Society, cannot be pronounced by any Superintendent without the greatest caution. The rule is very important, and as it illustrates a *principle* now under consideration, I will quote it at length:—

1. No sentence of expulsion shall hereafter be pronounced by any Superintendent *in the same meeting* at which the *trial* shall have taken place. To afford time for full inquiry into the past character of the party, and other circumstances, and for calm and careful deliberation, the sentence shall be deferred for *at least one week* after the trial; unless the Superintendent be fully satisfied at once, that the case is one in which some of the milder forms of discipline should alone be adopted, and that expulsion is not at all to be contemplated.

2. In difficult or doubtful cases, the Superintendent is now further

directed, not to proceed to the actual sentence of expulsion without privately asking information from such individual leaders, or other judicious and experienced members of the society, as are most likely to put him in full possession of all the circumstances necessary to his forming, with due discretion and caution, his own final judgment on the subject.

The point to which I wish to direct your attention is this—that no Superintendent must summarily proceed to the expulsion of a member, merely because his guilt has been proved in a Leaders' Meeting. He must make "full inquiry into the past character of the party and other circumstances." He must privately ask information from experienced and judicious members of the society, in order to possess all possible information necessary to direct his judgment on so momentous a subject. But suppose, that three or four members of the society are implicated in the same apparent violation of the laws of Methodism. The result of all these inquiries may righteously influence the final judgment of the Superintendent, that the end of law and justice will be secured, by the expulsion of one of the number, and by suitable admonition being addressed to the others. On this principle the decisions of Conference were founded. The official document, which is merely a plain statement of facts and acts of discipline, and in no respect to be considered as a defence of the proceedings of Conference, any further than as simple truth always carries with it a shield of protection, affords evidence on this point. Mr. Everett is said to have positively and peremptorily "refused to give a frank and brotherly answer for the satisfaction of his fellow-labourers, to a question seriously affecting the peace, unity, and order of the Connexion," and that "he expressed his refusal in terms, and in a tone, justly offensive." It is said that "a similar question was put

to Mr. Burdsall, which he also, *though in a very different manner*, declined to answer." A deputation of ministers was sent by the Conference to Mr. Everett, requesting him once more to present himself before the Conference, and respond to its inquiries. But he again positively declared, that he would answer no question relating to the *Fly Sheets*, and *that he would not attend the Conference*. The plain answer to your inquiry then, is this, that on calm and careful deliberation, with a full knowledge "of the past character of the party and other circumstances," sentence of expulsion was passed on Mr. Everett, and at that time, on no other contumacious Minister.

7. *Is it just, is it Christian, is it English to try, condemn, and expel a man, by a packed, one-sided, and prejudged jury,—without witness, without proof?*

There is one epithet employed in this question, which is to me perfectly unintelligible, *a prejudged jury*. I have heard of a prejudged criminal, but what a prejudged jury means, I cannot comprehend ; perhaps it is a mere verbal mistake, for prejudiced. The answer may be given in a few words,—it is not just, nor Christian, nor English to inflict a penalty an any accused man, without witness, without proof, by a packed, one-sided, and prejudiced jury. But Mr. Everett was not so tried and condemned. I have stated the ground of his expulsion, and it is not necessary to repeat it. I have heard the term *un-English* applied several times to the late proceedings of Conference, and your question suggests the same thing. I should like to make a remark or two on that subject. Questions involving scriptural, spiritual, and ecclesiastical matters, are not to be regulated and

decided by public, national feeling and opinion. If they were, those matters could possess in themselves, nothing real and permanent. Public opinion varies in different countries, as in France, Austria, Russia, Switzerland ; indeed, it changes in the same country at different periods. Bull-baiting and cock-fighting were real English sports, public opinion affirmed it. But a change has taken place, and we think it now to be more Spanish than English to take delight in such amusements. So when I hear it stated that the proceedings of Conference were *un-English* (which by the way I deny) I am not startled out of my propriety, as though that must necessarily be wrong and bad, which is *un-English*.

“Methodism exists for purposes which are *purely religious* : it has no direct design to secure the natural rights of men, to reform human governments, or even those which are ecclesiastical. As far as the individual is concerned, it meets him ‘fleeing from the wrath to come, and desiring to be saved from his sins,’ and it points him to the Lamb of God, to the means and influences of grace, and to the duties which he owes to God and man. As far as the community is concerned, its design is ‘to spread scriptural holiness through the land.’ An individual makes choice of Methodism for religious purposes, and through its instrumentality these purposes are graciously attained. He has no right to bring in his political analogies here, and to talk of the natural rights of man, or of the conventional rights of man ; of his rights as a man, or of his rights as a Briton. He has to talk, if talk he will, of his rights as a Methodist : for supposing there be anything in Methodism which requires the sacrifice of his conventional rights, for the good of his soul, he voluntarily made

the surrender when he began to seek its salvation by Methodistic agency and Methodistic means. If his rights as a Methodist are infringed, let him complain Methodistically, and his complaints will be heard, and his injury redressed." The *Times*, of Monday, September 3rd, in an article on recent acts of discipline by the Conference, takes up the matter, precisely as you would expect from such a quarter. It can no more understand the spiritual objects of Methodism, than it could define and defend the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, and of entire sanctification. There is a common-sense view of a question, however, which the *Times* rarely fails to take, and it has presented it on this occasion, in the following words. "'*Volenti non fit injuria*,' and it would be a very idle piece of pure knight-errantry to protect an injured Wesleyan or Independent, who has, of course, in his own hands the most effectual remedy." The force of this sentence will be lost upon many readers, because the point lies in a Latin maxim. A free, but truthful, rendering of the words is this—"No injury is done to a consenting party." Certainly not; if I freely, voluntarily consent to laws involving fines on failure in certain requirements which I know will devolve upon me, I have no right, when the fine is inflicted, to represent myself as an injured man. *Volenti non fit injuria*. I have the remedy in my own hands. I am as free to withdraw from the club as I was to enter it, but so long as I continue to be a voluntary member, I must pay my sixpence, and *it is un-English* to whine about it. The *Times* speaks of "a gross outrage on our Old English notions of fair play," but at the same time candidly states that "of the parties themselves, of the *Fly Sheets*, or the usual practice of Conference we know next to

nothing." Its competency, then, to give judgment on these matters, is out of the question. "How can we reason, but from what we know." I would grant very readily the ability of the *Times* as an exponent of public opinion, to give a judgment as to "fair play," on cases which it can understand, and which come within its legitimate province. But I demur altogether, as to its qualifications to be oracular, on matters which involve the New Testament *Laws of Purity*, in reference both to the pastors and members of the church of Christ.

8. Upon what ground were Messrs. Dunn and Griffith expelled?

They acknowledged that they were in communication with a paper, which the Conference declared to be "hostile to the principles and interests of our connexion," and which "endeavoured to subvert the original principles of the connexion." And if Conference, which holds in trust, the doctrines, discipline, and economy of Methodism, be not competent to judge what proceedings and recommendations tend to subvert the original principles of the connexion, I am bold to say, no authority can be found in existence. Mr. Dunn and Mr. Griffith declined to answer questions officially proposed to them in the Conference by the President, in matters gravely affecting their religious and ministerial character. Their whole case was seriously and calmly considered. The decision to which the Conference came, was,—

First,—That they be reproved from the chair of the Conference, and be considered to be disqualified, at present, from being Circuit Superintendents. *Second*,—That they fully satisfy the Conference, if not as to their recent conduct in the matters in question, yet, at least, as it respects the course they will pursue in future; and that, for this purpose, they

give to the Conference an absolute and unequivocal pledge of their resolution at once to discontinue their publication of the 'Wesley Banner,' and their encouragement of other hostile and offensive publications; and that they also pledge themselves to abstain from taking part, directly or indirectly, in any agitating or divisive proceedings, which may be pursued by others, either as to recent acts of discipline, or as to the settled principles and laws of the connexion.

They refused to give a promise of future fidelity and loyalty to Methodism, and were accordingly, expelled.

9. *If expelled for writing for the Wesley Banner, and Wesleyan Times, what authority has the Conference to interfere with the public press?*

I have stated on what ground they were actually expelled. The authority of Conference is over its own members, and not over the public press. But if you reply, that it exerts this authority substantially, when it prohibits its members from contributing to the public press, I have no objection to consider the matter in that aspect. The *public press* is a very comprehensive phrase. It includes the *Weekly Despatch*, *Bell's Life in London*, the *Satirist*, the *Sunday Times*, &c. &c. It will be admitted by most people, that contributions to these papers by Methodist preachers would be wrong, and that Conference should exercise authority over its members, to save Methodism from the disgrace of such association. Some limit, then, does arise as to the right of men professing godliness, and especially of Methodist ministers, in reference to connexion with the public press. Would the Government of Ireland have connived at some public officer, receiving pay from the treasury, and occupying a seat at the council table, if he had been discovered to be a regular correspondent of the *Nation* newspaper? Would he have retained his place, if he positively refused

to give any promise not to communicate for the future, with a party secretly proposing, and all but actually avowing their intention, to overthrow the Government? I leave you to trace the analogy.

10. *There being two parties in the Conference—is it not an act of tyranny in the dominant party using means to stop the reporters of the opposing party, whilst their own party are allowed full liberty?*

There were not, properly speaking, two *parties* in the Conference. There was a *faction*, consisting of three or four individuals among the number of five hundred and fifty Ministers assembled. A *faction* is defined to be “a party, in political society, combined or acting in union, in opposition to the prince, government or state.” In this sense of the word only, there *was* a *party* acting in union to adopt a course, which, in the judgment of Conference was injurious to the commonwealth of Methodism. It was not *tyrannical* in the Conference to inhibit reports being sent to a paper which was declared to be, in its principles and recommendations, subversive of the original principles of the Connexion, for two reasons. 1. From the manner and spirit adopted and evident in the reports. The statements put forth were calculated utterly to mislead those who depended upon them for information, on account of their omission of several important matters, and the colouring introduced into the narratives of fact. 2. Because self-preservation is a first law of nature, applying equally to individuals, to states, and to communities: and the man who would tolerate that which is *suicidal*, would be guilty of a *felo-de-se*.

11. *Is it not inquisitorial to place a man at the bar of Conference, and force him to sacrifice his liberty of conscience (because he is of the minority) or be expelled from the Connexion in which he has lived and laboured: and be cast upon the world homeless, penniless, and THEY WISH FRIENDLESS?*

The words in emphasis are given as such in your inquiry. I have promised not to comment on the spirit in which certain questions are proposed, but I must protest against the right of any professing christian, to impute such base and unworthy motives to Ministers of the gospel, or indeed, to any men. The words of the apostle have a very pertinent application to this whole subject,—“*doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.*” The question of conscience must be settled by every man previously to his becoming a Methodist preacher. The doctrine, and discipline of Methodism are before him. It is for him *then* to decide, whether his judgment and conscience will allow him to become a member of a brotherhood of Ministers, united together on such terms of agreement. When he has made his election of Methodism, among the many competing systems of churches differing from each other in doctrine and in the mode of ecclesiastical government, it is too late for him to put in the plea of conscience, as a defence for contumacy. There is nothing inquisitorial in requiring a man to be honest,—in demanding that he shall fulfil obligations into which he voluntarily entered. He has the choice of alternatives: he may exercise the freedom which enabled him to join the association of Ministers, and voluntarily retire,—or he may suffer the expulsion which his inconsistency justifies.

12. *It is said, the Conference was extremely sorry to expel these men, and did all they consistently could, to retain them. How do you reconcile this, with the fact that when they wished to give an explanation of their conduct, or when others wished to speak in their favour, the Conference would not hear them—they were clamoured down?*

It is said—Yes, most truly said, that the Conference was extremely sorry to expel them, and did all they consistently could, to retain them. The time occupied in investigating the whole affair—the conditions offered to Mr. Griffith and Mr. Dunn, as to their continuance in the Ministry among the Methodists—the tenderness shown to Mr. Burdsall—the comparatively slight exercise of discipline adopted in reference to Mr. George—the desire of Conference that Mr. Everett should again be present with his brethren, and reconsider his avowed purpose—these, and other facts which I could mention, prove the unwillingness of Conference to proceed to expulsion. I deny the statement as to the accused party being clamoured down. Your authority for that remark is the one to which I have referred, and which I have characterized in replying to your tenth inquiry.

I have now replied *seriatim* to the questions which you have proposed. I am not conscious of having evaded the real point designed, in any one of them. I have written candidly—I think dispassionately—I am sure with the fear of God before my eyes, and with the love of truth and liberty in my heart. I have no secret malevolence to gratify by the Ministerial degradation of the three brethren referred to. With two of them I have been on terms of intimacy for twenty years. I can fully appreciate the genius and ability of one of

them. I can do justice to the unwearied industry and labours of another of the number. I can admire the energy of character and the zeal displayed by the third. "Plato is my friend, and Socrates is my friend, but truth is dearer to me than either of them." I believe that they have taken a *false* step, and most heartily do I join in the hope and prayer, "that it may please God to bring them to a better mind, and guide them into a different course of action."

But, as to Methodism itself, I entertain no fears. I adopt the sentiments, and in part the language, of an able apologist for Methodism, during a byegone period of its chequered history. I am full of hope as to the future, that out of "seeming ill," good will be educed. A placid state of the church is not favourable, either to an elevated piety or profound theology. The Augustan period of English theology was a period of intense strife and debate. Owen, Howe, Baxter, Calamy, and the Nonconformists on the one side ; and Jeremy Taylor, Hammond, Hall, Chillingworth, and the Episcopalianians on the other, thought, wrote, and preached in the midst of the storms of the Commonwealth. Human nature is much the same in every age : but circumstances often call forth its latent powers in brilliant and majestic force, and we are indebted incidentally, to the evils of those times, for the most profound, elaborate, practical, and eloquent theology to be found in the Christian Church, in the writings of those noble spirits who were wound up to their elevation, by disputes and trials. In a lower degree, I hope, a similar effect will arise out of our troubles. If Methodist preachers cannot be expected to accumulate, in mountain masses, thought, sentiment, criticism, eloquent discourses, and systematic theology,

as they did, yet still they may imitate their industry, devotion, holiness, and zealous preaching. And, if one desire be more prominent in my mind than another, it is, that the suspicions now thrown on the body of the preachers, may lead them to follow the example of those great and excellent men, and in every way improve their ministry, by "*the things they suffer.*"

I have said that I am full of hope for the future. With a thousand faithful ministers scattered over the country, pledged to a firm adherence to the system of Wesleyan Methodism, prayerfully and piously devoted to its great objects; actuated, notwithstanding the assertions to the contrary, with an affectionate desire to promote the best interests of their charge, zealously and faithfully proclaiming to large congregations the great and saving truths of the gospel, and united to each other in the bonds of a confiding and fraternal affection ; I say, a cause so supported, is not to be despaired of : and when the present dark and cloudy day clears up, its massiveness and beauty will be more distinctly seen than ever.

